

EASTER FESTIVAL SERMON 2009
THE KING of kings LIVES! ALLELUIA!

The Lord is risen! *He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!*

What a glorious day to celebrate the joy of our salvation. Today is the crowning victory over sin and death. As Easter people we celebrate this Good News: The Lord is risen! *He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!*

Let us pray: God of victory, is there no end to your mercies toward those who seek You? Will You never cease loving us? We thank You that Your goodness is past finding out! Today, we come before you to honor and praise You for the victory You have won for us. Today, we celebrate new life because of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Today, we need most of all, in these uncertain economical times, the assurance that underneath us are the everlasting arms of hope. Help us to meditate on Your Word of Hope and fill us with Your Spirit to focus our eyes upon Jesus, Your Son, and receive the eternal inheritance You grant. Amen.

Several years ago lived a man by the name of Hugo von Rumker. He was a collector of art; not just any art. Hugo collected art masterpieces by Rembrandt, Picasso, Monet, Van Gogh, and others. After Hugo's wife died, he raised his only child, a son – Joseph. Joseph also loved art and the two of them would look for great masterpieces to collect.

When the Vietnam war was happening, Joseph was drafted into the Army. Hugo and Joseph would write letters to each other to stay in touch. One day, the military came and told Hugo that his son, Joseph, was killed in action.

Hugo mourned his son's death. Several years later, a knock came at Hugo's door. Standing before him was a young man with one arm. He had lost his arm in battle during the Vietnam war. In the other arm he carried a package. The young man introduced himself and said he was a friend of Joseph. Hugo invited the young man in. The young man shared stories of he and Joseph while serving over in Vietnam. He gave Hugo the package and asked Hugo to unwrap it. Inside was a portrait of Joseph drawn by this man. Hugo wept as he caressed the portrait and looked upon the face of his son with love and fond memories.

The man shared how Joseph had saved his life during the battle that later got Joseph killed. Joseph had seen his buddy fall to the ground when a shell hit the man's body that ripped off most of his arm. The man told Hugo that Joseph had risked being shot himself to come and carry him to safety, where the medics were able to care for him. Joseph went back into the battle and eventually was shot and killed.

The man told Hugo that he had drawn the portrait of Joseph the day before they went into this battle. Because Joseph had saved his life, he treasured this portrait and wanted to find Joseph's father, if he could.

Hugo thanked the man and invited him to stay for dinner. The two became close friends. Hugo gave the man instructions to care for his estate when he died. A few years later, Hugo died, and the man remembered the promise he had made to Hugo.

An auction was held for Hugo's estate that included many precious pieces of art. Many collectors came to the auction in anticipation of buying these masterpieces.

The auctioneer placed the first piece of art up for auction – the picture of Joseph. He said, "This is a picture of Hugo's son. This is the first piece of art up for sale." He asked, "Who will give me \$10,000

for the son?" No one bid. The picture was a rough sketch that was crumpled and dirty. For the art collector's it had no value. The auctioneer asked again for an opening bid, but no one offered. The people yelled out to the auctioneer to get on with the auction and put up real art.

However, the auctioneer refused and kept asking for a bid on the sketch of Joseph. No one bid on the sketch. The auctioneer once again asked, "The son, the son, who wants the picture of the son? No one did. Finally, a hand went up. It was the man who had visited Hugo years before. The auctioneer asked again for more bids, but no one bid. He then said, "The picture is yours." Then what followed was beyond imagination.

The auctioneer said, "This concludes the auction." With that he stepped down and started to walk away. The people were outraged. "We came here to bid on the masterpieces in Hugo's estate. Why are you not auctioning them off to us?" The auctioneer replied, "Mr. Rumker had given me specific instructions to only auction off the picture of his son. Whoever took the son would receive the remainder of the estate. The man who took the son gets everything!"

God gave His son 2,000 years ago to die on the cross, laying down His life for His friends. Much like the auctioneer, His message today is: 'The son, the son, who'll take the son?'

Because, you see, whoever takes the Son gets everything.

FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, WHO SO EVER BELIEVETH, SHALL HAVE ETERNAL LIFE....THAT'S LOVE!

Because of that love God has for us, we celebrate today, the day of resurrection, the day of glory, the day of victory! Jesus, our King, lives! Alleluia! Death is overcome by resurrected life. As St. Paul writes, "*Where, O grave, is your victory. Where, O death, is Your sting! The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law. But, thanks be to God. He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

The heaven resounds over this Good News. We celebrate and sing our Alleluias in praise to God because of this Good News. We are here to worship the King of kings who lives! The Lord is risen! *He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!*

One final note – The well-known composer, Irving Berlin, who wrote such favorites as "God Bless America" and "White Christmas" also wrote "Easter Parade." He was asked once by a reporter for the San Diego Union, "Is there any question you've never been asked that you would like someone to ask you?"

"Yes," he replied, "there is one. What do you think of the many songs you've written that didn't become hits?" My reply would be that I still think they are wonderful."

God, too, has an unshakeable delight in what – and whom – he has made. He thinks each of His children are wonderful masterpieces. Whether they're a "hit" or "valued as precious" in the eyes of others or not, God will always think of them as the most wonderful and the very best of His creation.

People of God, you are Easter people because you are the piece of art that He created in His image and redeemed with the precious blood of His Son. HE called you to follow Him and has given you the faith to receive the inheritance of His whole estate – heaven itself. In our heavenly Father's eyes, we are His precious children whom He loved to send His Son into the battlefield of death so we might be delivered and given life – eternal life.

Jesus lives! The King of kings Lives! Alleluia! Amen.

By Pastor Vern Oestmann